

East Orange Ruritans celebrate 75 years of service

Sandy James | Posted: Thursday, April 23, 2015 6:00 am

Last Monday, April 13, members of the East Orange Ruritan Club gathered together for a special 75th anniversary celebration dinner.

President Bob Wright welcomed nearly 60 members and guests to the event held at the Ruritan building near the intersection of Routes 20 and 522 in Unionville.

Member and Past National Director Perry Marshman thanked associate members, and expressed appreciation to Sheriff Mark Amos and members of the board of supervisors who were in attendance, along with county administrator Bryan David.

Marshman spoke to the group about how different things were in 1940, when the Orange club was started.

He said Franklin Roosevelt was president and WWII was about to begin.

“In everyday life, the yearly income was \$1,725, the cost of a new home was \$3,920, a new car was \$850, hamburger was 14 cents a pound, gas was 11 cents a gallon and a loaf of bread was 8 cents,” he said.

Marshman highlighted popular culture of the era including movies like “Gone with the Wind” and “The Wizard of Oz,” along with musical icons like Frank Sinatra and Irving Berlin.

He said he believed one of the most important local happenings of the time was the formation of the East Orange Ruritan Club.

“These 25 men started something great—a community service organization that has lasted 75 years,” he said.

Marshman said a review of old records revealed the scope of the club’s contributions over the years. He listed weekday religious education, American Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Little League, eyeglasses for those in need, Sheltering Arms, March of Dimes, American Cancer Society, Tuberculosis Association, Unionville Elementary School trips, local fire departments, 4-H,



Ruritans 75-1

Last Monday, April 13, members of the East Orange Ruritan Club gathered together for a special 75th anniversary celebration dinner. Here, member and Past National Director Perry Marshman addresses the group and gives a brief history of the club.

Hospice of the Rapidan, Love Outreach, Project Excel and the USDA food program as some of the recipients of Ruritan contributions through the years.

“In 1944 we found where the club made a donation to the USO and Red Cross, and in 1948 they donated to the Unionville Community Fair,” he said.

Marshman said the club has always supported education and oldest records show \$75 annual scholarships for nursing students. He said current scholarships exceed \$4,000 each year and since 2005, the club has awarded \$39,900 in scholarships to Orange County students.

He said the organization has hosted many fundraisers throughout the years, and the oldest on record was selling drinks at a donkey basketball game which brought in \$28.34.

He said the club also sold brooms, oysters and had antique shows and fund-raising has evolved to include selling food at the Somerset Steam and Gas Show, street festivals, auctions, car shows and other events.

Marshman said the East Orange Ruritans also provide lunch for local veterans and spouses at the Orange American Legion Hall on Veteran’s Day, as a small way to thank them for their service.

He said in keeping with the Ruritan mission, a home was built for a man in need in 1974, and another was built last year for a woman with Down Syndrome. He said the club was instrumental in the placement of a traffic light at the intersection of Routes 522 and 20 and caution lights at Lightfoot and Unionville Elementary Schools, as well as a fence at Lightfoot.

“Our environment is important also, and in 1962 we planted 500 pines around UES and a few years ago we were invited to Montpelier to plant trees and shrubs,” he said.

Marshman said the group conducts roadside cleanups twice a year and started accepting electronics for recycling at the Ruritan grounds three years ago. The recycling event is scheduled for May 16 this year and a document shredding event is scheduled for May 9.

He said the club donated a drug dog to Orange County in 1991 and sent an officer to training school, which gave the club a hand in helping make the county safer.

“Do you know how many hot dogs we had to sell to do this?” he asked.

Marshman said individuals had not been forgotten. The club made a bathroom and kitchen accessible for a young woman with cerebral palsy. They raised funds for a child’s kidney transplant, so the child no longer needs dialysis and they weatherized an elderly woman’s home so she would not have to choose between medicine and heating bills.

He said the Orange County Board of Supervisors granted the club a long-term lease on the building in 2000, and allowed them to remodel it into a community center which provides a meeting place for Young at Heart, Scouts, Little League and many others.

“We are not just celebrating an anniversary. We are celebrating the generosity, care and service that this club has brought to East Orange and the surrounding area,” he said.

Zone Two Governor Bobby Goodwin, “It is a real pleasure to say I have been a Ruritan for 52 years and to be associated with people like you.”

Linda Bradshaw, Rapidan District Governor and public relations coordinator, said East Orange has been very active and she is pleased to see all the young people involved in the club.

Sarah Kelly, National Director, said, “People don’t buy what you do--they buy why you do it.” She presented the club with a 75th anniversary certificate.

Orange County Board of Supervisors chairman Lee Frame presented a resolution that was approved by the board to thank the club for its service to the citizens of the county. He said the Ruritans take some of the workload off the county and the taxpayers.

“There are things you do for the people of Orange County that the county could never do. It’s organizations like this that really make our country function,” he said.

Ruritan National President Bobby Burton said, “You are the shining light in this community.”